



# ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

*Abraxas*

VIN DE TERROIR, SCINTILLA SONOMA VINEYARD, 2012





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VIN DE TERROIR



*Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard*

2012

## *Terroir in the Bionic Age!*

“Gentlemen, we can rebuild him. We have the technology. We have the capability to build the world’s first bionic man... Better than he was before. Better, stronger, faster.”

That overly optimistic, iconically kitsch seventies show, “The Six Million Dollar Man,” revealed our nation’s love affair with technology as a magic fix-all. And why not? We were the first to land a man on the moon and our science was the most advanced on earth. We, as a nation, believed we could do anything - not only “fix” our problems, but improve on nature!

Ah, wouldn’t that be nice if all problems were so easily solved with a six million dollar investment? Better, stronger, faster! We could arrest global warming and provide fresh water to the world. Eradicate illness or design bionic limbs that work better than the real thing. But what about the unintended consequences of technology? We, as a people, tend to only look forward. Fix a problem, move on, then fix the next problem. But every once in a while, even a good “fix” can still destroy the essence of something by removing the random and the unknown, making it too perfect or too easily replicable. Sometimes, the perceived flaws or weaknesses are what made it unique and distinctive in the first place.

We had one desire when we started this endeavor: to make a world class wine. So, we embraced state of the art cellar technology and looked to science to help us deal with our problems, figuring that was the answer to making a wine that tasted like it was world class. But the further we wandered down that path, the more unsatisfied we became. Though the wines were technically correct, something was missing.

We all have had that experience of tasting a wine and identifying it with a place. It could be an earthy or herbal character, maybe a level of acidity or a minerality. It might be technically flawed, based on some critic’s point of view of what a great wine should be, but it also does not taste like every other wine.

I used to have these discussions with my father. He is a man of science and, based on his experience in the medical world, technology was salvation. He pioneered ultrasound and lasers for eye surgery when they were still considered experimental techniques. This quantum leap in med tech reduced suffering and improved quality of life. No one would argue that removing cataracts the old way was actually better. But wine is not about perfection, it is about distinctiveness, and sometimes making something too perfect is less than exciting.

Bordeaux is an example of how technology can create high scoring wines that taste more alike, resembling beverages from other regions. Some Bordelaise vintners have embraced consultants who advocate the use of high-tech winemaking like micro-oxygenation that softens tannin to make a wine drinkable younger. But the big homogenizer of wine has been the sorting tables that allow a vintner to select grapes for ripeness which, based on old benchmarks, should have been a good thing. Instead, the grapes that were deemed less than ideal no longer offer up the herbal, green note characteristics that once defined the region and provided a counterpoint to the ripe, sweet fruit...

now, the all super-ripe grapes result in powerful, high alcohol wines that taste as though they could be from California, Australia, Italy or Spain.

Ironically, the quest to make world class wines caused us to look inward. Instead of basing quality on external forces, like a critic's opinion or the wines from other parts of the world, we look to our own land for inspiration and rely less on the "tricks" of the trade. In our opinion, a world class wine is distinctive, unique, and tastes as though it came from somewhere... and the only way to do that is to put away the chemistry set and the toys and make real wine.





### ***Wine Growing Notes***

What if, instead of pursuing an ideal by means of alteration and manipulation, we embrace the unique qualities that come from the interaction of place, weather and grape, to create something that is distinctive instead of another “perfect” California wine?

Abraxas is a salute to distinctiveness and a reaction against homogeneity. Born of the idea that four classic grapes - Riesling, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer - planted in RSV's CCOF certified organic Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard, would respond distinctly to the unique weather patterns of each year. Then, the four varieties could be blended, in ratios determined by each variety's unique response to the vintage, making the wine whole while avoiding the manipulations often found in a more industrialized cellar. Abraxas does not aspire to be anything but true to vintage.

Vintage Notes: 2012 was the antithesis of 2011. One of the driest winters on record was saved by a “March Miracle” spring rain. As the clouds cleared it laid the groundwork for practically perfect flowering conditions. The exceptional growing season culminated in just about perfect ripening weather, for great concentration and flavor development with lower potential alcohols.

### ***Wine Tasting Notes***

Beautiful citrus, pear and white flower aromas with a hint of flint and spice - a stone wall greets the flowers growing on it - the Riesling lends a racy brightness, the Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc paint with a textured brush and the Gewürztraminer lifts with a spicy note. Though this wine is yummy young, the great surprise has been its ability to evolve with age... especially the magnums.

### ***Abraxas - The Name***

Three hundred and sixty-five days shape Abraxas. It's even in the name itself. If you apply isopsephy (the Grecian practice of adding up the number values of the letters in a word) to the Greek letters of Abraxas, ΑΒΡΑΣΑΞ (Α=1, Β=2, Ρ=100, Α=1, Σ=200, Α=1, Ξ=60) the sum is 365. In ancient times, the Gnostic Basilideans believed that Abraxas ruled the 365 heavens, each one with its lesser god and a virtue for every day of the year. In later years, the name morphed into the magic word, Abracadabra. It seems appropriate, as we feel this wine is pretty magical.

***(Type “Abraxas” on your iPhone - it autocorrects to Abracadabra!)***



## GRUDGE MATCH

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I was driving through the Nahe region of Germany when it suddenly occurred to me that the fields of mounded dirt covered with black plastic were actually fields of Spargel, in this case white. The Germans are fervent about their Spring Spargel... and so am I, as the perfect wine for Spargel is Riesling. In California, Spargel, or Asparagus as we know it, is disparaged as a poor match for wine. That is because most people have only tried it with a ripe and woody Chardonnay.

Abraxas with its aromatic blend of Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and a touch of Gewürztraminer is perfect, not only with Asparagus but, as I discovered, a plethora of other vegetables. Wine with vegetables is usually a grudge match with the wine being the loser, but in the case of Abraxas the match is an epic draw!

Until the Next Wine....

*Maria*

## HERBED RADISH SALAD

### Serves 4

2 bunches red radish, about 16-20 radishes  
2 teaspoons chopped dill  
1 tablespoon chopped flatleaf parsley  
2 teaspoons chopped tarragon  
2 teaspoons minced shallot  
1/2 lemon  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper

1. Trim the root and leaves from radishes and wash well. Drain. Cut into thin slices or quarters. Place in a bowl.
2. Add the chopped herbs and shallots. Toss.
3. Squeeze lemon over and toss. Season to taste with salt and pepper and toss again. Add olive oil and toss. Serve immediately.

## SPICY SESAME GINGER GREEN BEANS

### Serves 4

1 pound green beans, trimmed  
Kosher salt  
2 teaspoons canola oil  
1/4 teaspoon toasted sesame oil  
1 tablespoon minced ginger  
1 medium garlic clove, minced  
3 green onions, trimmed & thinly sliced  
Pinch chili flake  
1 tablespoon fish sauce  
2 teaspoons soy sauce

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add salt so it tastes like seawater. Add the beans and blanch for 3 minutes. Remove from the water with a slotted spoon and drain.
2. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the canola oil and then the ginger, garlic and green onion. Cook for 30 seconds.
3. Add the beans and quickly toss to combine. Cook to 2 minutes tossing or stirring constantly so garlic doesn't burn and the beans are warmed through.
4. Remove the pan from the heat and add the fish and soy sauce. Toss quickly to coat the beans and transfer to a serving bowl.

## SPINACH AND PARMESAN TARTLETS

*Meaty, curly savoy style spinach adds its wonderful sweet flavor to these delicious tartlets. Yield: 48 tartlets*

1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
1 tablespoon minced shallot  
8 ounces curly spinach, washed and trimmed  
Kosher salt  
Black Pepper  
2 large eggs  
1 1/2 cups heavy cream  
1/2 cup grated Parmesan  
48 2 inch brisee (pie dough) circles, 1/8 inch thick  
1 2 compartment mini muffin pan

1. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the butter. When the butter starts to brown add the shallots. Stir quickly then add the spinach. Toss until the spinach is wilted and tender, season lightly with salt and black pepper. Remove to a strainer and drain well. Cool and chop finely. Reserve.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs together until yolks and whites are thoroughly combined. Stir in the cream, Parmesan and cooled spinach. Season with 1 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of black pepper.
3. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
4. Line each compartment of the mini-muffin tin with a brisee circle. DO NOT butter the tin or the tartlets will not release. Use your fingertips to press the dough securely into the compartments. Fill each "tartlet" with filling up to the top of the brisee dough.
5. Bake in the oven for 15 to 20 minutes until puffed and golden. Remove from the pan by running a sharp knife around the edge of each tartlet to release.



## FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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Robert Sinskey Vineyards  
6320 Silverado Trail  
Napa, CA 94558  
707.944.9090  
robertsinskey.com

Winemaker: Jeff Virnig  
Recipes: Maria Helm Sinskey  
Photos and Text: Rob Sinskey  
Vineyard Manager: Debby Zygielbaum  
gluttons@robertsinskey.com

